CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of producing a low protein flour pasta, said method comprising:

blending a low protein flour and water to produce a pasta dough with a moisture content of about 25 to about 45 percent, wherein the low protein flour has a protein level of less than about 12 percent;

extruding the pasta dough to form a desired pasta shape;

drying the desired pasta shape at a temperature of at least about 75°C and a relative humidity of at least about 70 percent for a time sufficient to produce a dried pasta with a final moisture content of about 8 to about 13 percent;

wherein the dried pasta does not contain significant amounts of a texture enhancing agent; and

wherein the dried pasta has a textural firmness, after cooking, of about 12 to about 21 kgf.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the low protein flour has a protein level of less than about 10 percent

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the drying temperature for the desired pasta shape is at least about 80°C.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the drying temperature for the desired pasta shape is at least about 100°C.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the desired pasta shape is dried for at least about 4.5 hours and the relative humidity is about 75 to about 85 percent.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.

8. The method of claim 3, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.

10. The method of claim 5, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the low protein flour is a soft wheat flour.

12. A low protein flour pasta comprising a low protein flour, wherein the low protein flour has less than about 12 percent protein, wherein the low protein flour pasta has a moisture content of about 8 to about 13 percent and a textural firmness, after cooking, of about 12 to about 21 kgf, and wherein the low protein flour pasta does not contain significant amounts of a texture enhancing agent.

13. The low protein flour pasta of claim 12, wherein the low protein flour pasta is prepared by the method comprising:

blending the low protein flour and water to produce a pasta dough with a moisture content of about 25 to about 45 percent, wherein the soft wheat flour has a protein level of less than about 10 percent;

extruding the pasta dough into a desired pasta shape;

drying the desired pasta shape at a temperature of at least about 75°C at a relative humidity of at least about 70 percent for a time sufficient to produce the low protein flour pasta.

14. The low protein flour pasta of claim 13, wherein the drying temperature of the desired pasta shape is at least about 80°C.

15. The low protein flour pasta of claim 13, wherein the drying temperature of the desired pasta shape is at least about 100°C.

16. The low protein flour pasta of claim 13, wherein the desired pasta shape is dried for at least about 4.5 hours and the relative humidity is about 75 to about 85 percent.

17. The low protein flour pasta of claim 14, wherein the low protein flour is a soft wheat flour.

18. A low-protein flour, dried pasta comprising:

a soft wheat flour wherein the soft wheat flour has a protein level of less than 12 percent and wherein the pasta does not contain significant amounts of a texture enhancing agent;

a moisture content, after drying, from about 8 to about 13 percent; and

wherein the dried pasta has a textural firmness, after cooking, of about 12 to about 21 kgf.

19. The low protein flour pasta of claim 18, wherein the protein level of the soft wheat flour is less than about 10 percent.

20. The low protein flour pasta of claim 18, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.

21. The low protein flour pasta of claim 19, wherein the textural firmness after cooking is about 15 to about 18 kgf.